

Spirit of the Age.

A FAMILY NEWSPAPER—DEVOTED TO MORALITY, LITERATURE, AGRICULTURE, AND GENERAL INTELLIGENCE.

VOLUME II.

RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA, JANUARY 10, 1851.

NUMBER 19.

THE SPIRIT OF THE AGE

IS PUBLISHED EVERY FRIDAY, BY
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EDITOR AND PROPRIETOR.

TERMS:
To single Subscribers, \$1 50 per annum.
To Clubs of five, and upwards, \$1 each;
Payable in all cases in advance.
Advertisements inserted at the usual rates.
All Letters to the Editor must be post paid.

Choice Literature.

THE SEA CAPTAIN'S RETURN. A TALE FOUNDED ON FACT.

Capt. Potter, of Newport, R. I., was a wealthy and amiable gentleman, whose family consisted of his wife, the pattern of virtue, and one daughter, who though young, exhibited the beauty of her mother and the vivacity of her father. As he was experienced in the business of a sea captain, he was offered the command of a vessel, which promised great advantage, and with great reluctance left his wife and child to try his fate on that element whose composure lures to the gates of unpropitious destruction.

This voyage completed, Capt. P. determined to renounce the faithless deep forever, for the quiet of his own fireside. Previous to this departure he took a good ring from the finger of his wife, and placed it on his own, saying, "Should this return not on the same hand, you may rest assured that I am among the uncoffined dead of the ocean." Alas! Mrs. Potter was doomed to drink deep at the fountain of woe. After waiting the period of his expected return, she began to gaze on every sail that appeared and eagerly sought every opportunity to learn some tidings of her husband, or the fate of the ship in which he sailed. But all her efforts were ineffectual; the only information that could be, or at least over was obtained on the subject, was from an English vessel, which ran this:—"May 16, 1796, spoke with the Ranger from Newport; Capt. Potter, master, lat. 28 deg. 30 min. W." This indefinite intelligence was far from cheering to the heavy heart of Mrs. Potter. When she saw others blythe, it only reminded her of her own sadness; and while others were enjoying the reciprocity of conjugal society, it pointed her to the loneliness of her own heart. While other children were happy in the smiles of their parents, her magic little Mary would climb upon her knee and with accents that read a mother's heart, inquire if her father would not return. But month after month rolled away; season after season rolled their tireless wheels along, until fourteen years had been added to the congested centuries of the past; yet no tidings of Capt. Potter; no, not even a probable conjecture, concerning the dark mystery of his fate.

Time, that changes all things, had worn away the acuteness of Mrs. Potter's grief, which was far more intense than it would have been had she really wept at his grave, and known that his last moments had been soothed by affection. As this last voyage of the captain seemed to be near to the unknown coast, she was called the widow Potter. Having a country seat of great value, her hand was sought by many, and as often rejected, until a bachelor who had resisted the charms of womanhood for a quarter of a century, was smitten with the loveliness of this worthy matron, or with the comeliness of her possessions. She at length consented that her name should be changed to Morane; the bridal day was appointed, the arrangements were made to greet the coming period with festivity and mirth. The guests began to be more numerous than usual; even the FIDELITY began to surmise that something unusual was about to be done at the mansion of the widow.

Late in the afternoon of a cold, stormy day in November, a penniless beggar called at a neighboring house and enquired whether the widow Potter lived in this part of the city. His appearance denoted extreme poverty; his emaciated form was reduced to a skeleton; deep furrows were drawn in his cheeks, and his frame seemed to be stiffened in every joint by disease or hardships. Yet there was something in his eye which told he was born to a better fortune. "Yes," said his informant, "at the very next door, and to-night she is to be married."

"Is to be married?" said the beggar.
"How long has her husband been dead?"
"These many long years; he went off to sea and has not been heard of since."

"How has she sustained herself since her husband's death?"
"She has an unblemished character."

"Has she any children?"
"One daughter only, a fine young lady."

"I must see her before she is married; I have communications of importance."

So saying, he hurried as fast as his feeble limbs would allow to the splendid dwelling of the widow. The maid being summoned, and seeing him before her, was about to close the door against him, but the stranger interrupted her by saying:

"Madam, may a beggar be permitted to see the widow Potter?"
"We expect company to-night; therefore you must leave immediately."

But the man was still more importunate, and rightly thinking he was not likely to gain admittance without making known his errand, accosted the maid still more earnestly, "woman, I have some tidings of very great importance to communicate to the mistress of this mansion, which were given to me in trust by Capt. Potter, the former proprietor of this place. At the mention of this he was permitted to enter. The lady, who was soon to be Mrs. Morane, was informed that a rude beggar had some important information for her, and desired to see her, whereupon she rose to meet him; but Morane, who could not bear to have his intended bride absent for a moment, remonstrated.

"Let him be called in," said he, "if he has any secrets let us hear them together." Accordingly he was shown into the apartment where sat Mr. M. and Mrs. P. and her daughter.

"From whence are you?" asked Mrs. Potter.
"From the vile shores of Barbary."

"Doubtless you have suffered much; cruel people inhabit those regions."

"Much have I suffered—I was once in easy circumstances, but alas! the elements have sported with this vacillating frame."

"Yes, deep are the lines of hardship which are marked in thy furrowed cheeks."

The wanderer gazed at Mrs. Potter and wept.

"Why those tears," inquired Mrs. Potter.

"Ah!" rejoined the tremulous voice of the beggar, "I once had a daughter, who might have become what she is now, but since the third birth-day dawned on her cherub form these eyes have never beheld her."

"Come, come," ejaculated Morane, who was anxious that the intruder should depart, "let us have your tale of secrecy."

"It shall be given to Mrs. Potter alone."

"That cannot be," muttered Morane.

"But I have made a promise."

"What of your promise?"

"It is sacred as my life."

"Well speak and depart," said Morane.

The beggar, who, until now, had been a suppliant, assumed an attitude of authority—his eye which thus far had been beamless, kindled into an expression of the most benign determination.

"I have," said he, "a revelation entrusted me by Capt. Potter himself."

At the mention of this name, all was anxiety and attention—in her perturbation the mother let fall a volume of poems which she held in her hand; the daughter grew pale with solicitude, on hearing the name of her father.

"And sooner than betray my trust," continued he, "this right arm shall perish."

The pathos with which he uttered this, caused the blood to chill through their veins; and rush like a catarrh upon their hearts.

Morane, finding remonstrance was vain, consented for them to retire.

The man of want having quieted their fears, said no harm should befall the lady.

"There," said he, as he closed the door, "have you any knowledge of this?" presenting a gold ring.

"Yes," answered Mrs. Potter, "it is the one my husband wore away, and I would have given thousands to see it return on the same hand—but now I am convinced that he is among the uncounted victims that the feed monsters of the deep."

"How long since his departure?"

"Fourteen years."

"Could you recognise him after so long an absence?"

"Most certainly I could. If his features are so changed, just behind the thumb on the left wrist, his name is inscribed in unfading characters—in that I cannot be deceived."

"Read that," as he gave her his callous hand. The lady was just able to read "David Potter," and sank exhausted by her agitated feelings. The noise of her fall brought Morane into the apartment, with several of the wedding guests who had now arrived, and beheld Mrs. Potter senseless upon the floor—supposing some violence had been done to her person, they ordered the supposed ruffian to leave the house immediately. In vain did he protest his innocence. He was forcibly dragged out. As soon as Mrs. Potter had recovered sufficiently to speak—"merciful heaven," exclaimed the lady, "where is my husband—where is Capt. Potter? Do I dream or is it reality?" The woman is mad," said one. "Her brain is crazed," cried another. "It is the wild impulse of a dream," continued a third.

Captain Potter, who had been dragged from his own house, was called back to the scene from which he had been compelled, though reluctantly, to retire. The priest, who by this time had arrived, was overjoyed to see his old friend, the Captain. "Rejoice," said he Mrs. Potter, "thy husband was dead and is alive—was lost and is found."

From the moment I learned this intended marriage, I resolved to surprise you in the manner you have seen—you saw me weep at the sight of my own Mary—they were tears of joy. Having suffered incredible hardships, both by sea and land, I stand before you in these tattered garments with a broken constitution, rendered infirm by intense bodily exertion and suffering, yet rejoicing that I am permitted to stand among my former friends, in the land of the free. And," said the storm-beaten mariner, addressing his wife, "if you prefer this gentleman, whom you were about to wed, all shall be right—if you prefer your former husband, he will be happy in your choice."

"Let me have my first betrothed," said the agitated lady. Poor Morane sat like one stupefied, and attempted to appear indifferent, but retired as soon as the forms of ceremony would permit. His career was short, he came to the grave a wretched inebriate in a few short years. On the following day, Capt. Potter invited his friends and neighbors to meet him at his country-seat. The scene was one of lively interest, and the Captain returned home with this salutary lesson indelibly stamped upon his mind, never to forget those in adversity.

THE WEDDING.

TEMPERANCE PRINCIPLES CARRIED OUT.

To know the right, and live up to that knowledge in all cases, is a state of excellence to which few have ever yet attained.

The heart of Alice Graham was deeply imbued with a sense of right, and her innate love of it enabled her to discharge the smallest obligations with the same fidelity and exactness which was manifested in the performance of the greater and more ostensible duties. Beauty of person and "sweet attractive grace" she had not, but candor and decision, together with a highly cultivated intellect, were her distinguishing characteristics, and these secured for her a place in society which she rather shunned than sought. She was now the affianced bride of Francis Woodbury, Esq., the eldest son of Hon. T. Woodbury, of B—.

The day of their nuptials was appointed, and Alice looked forward to the approaching event, in all confidence, as the consummation of her highest earthly hopes of happiness. There was one circumstance, however, which she foresaw would be a source of discomfort to her, not because the path of duty was concealed at all, but the conflicting notions of propriety among her friends, in regard to her conduct on this occasion, was something to be dreaded. But the following conversation with her friend Grace Vernon will show her entire consecration of self to principle.

"Not have your own minister to solemnize your nuptials? I fear people will think you very obstinate, and pity Frank for the unhappy choice he has made."

Grace was one of those who were governed most essentially by what people say or think, and although Alice had assiduously labored to correct this low and erroneous notion in her friend, yet it was still a besetting sin. Does God approve? was the only question which Alice asked, and the approbation of conscience was a rich return for whatever she did. Grace was possessed of a lively temper, brilliant fancy, and a kind heart, and Alice loved her with all the affections of a sister. She sought to improve her mind by directing her thoughts into a more serious channel.

"Mine is to be a temperance wedding," said Alice. "As both parties are pledged to temperance, would it not be consistent that an Apostle of temperance should seal the holy bands?"

Yes, and I would have the Cold Water Army called out, with all their songs, banners and badges," said Grace, ironically, "and make a great occasion of being."

"I seek not a display of my principles, Grace, I only desire to live agreeably to my professions, as an accountable being."

"Your heart is so much in the cause, I fear there is little room left for the one you are about to be united to."

"I do not love Frank the less, with the view I take of the cause. It is one calculated to enlarge, ennoble and purify the heart of its promoters—they are the ones to be benefited even more than those who are raised from a degraded condition to a level with society. And besides, the spirit of benevolence and forbearance which it cherishes, is a sure foundation for domestic happiness. I shall take the vows in the perfect assurance that mine will be a cheerful, calm and happy life. I shall enter joyously upon its duties, with no dark cloud to obscure life's setting sun."

"I see your determination is to carry out your principles to the greatest possible extent. But does not Frank make any objections to this arrangement?"

"Certainly not. He sees the consistency and truthfulness of it, and is ready and willing to abide by my decision in this matter."

"I should like to see a gentleman take the stand you have, but it seems too masculine for a lady."

"Moral principle is as dear to one sex as to the other. The state of society, and the cause in question demand that a lady should carry out her principles in her appropriate sphere. This is all that I assume. I am certain that no harm can come from a conscientious discharge of duty, indeed I am about to receive the highest earthly reward; for it is this adherence to truth and principle, that has attracted and won one of the best hearts in the world."

"You will have one that you can govern, and that is what you would like, I suppose."

"Influence, my dear, not govern.—You cannot offend my sense of propriety more than to charge me with that odious spirit. Were I not sensible of exerting some influence over that heart, mine would still have been uncase."

"You have a wonderful control over your affections, and with whatever else we may charge you, we cannot say that your course of conduct is inconsistent with your professions. But do you not care for the remarks which follow a departure from general usages?"

"Usages which grow out of erroneous principle, and incongruous with duty and feeling, I fear not to depart from, neither heed the remarks of the careless observer."

"We differ somewhat on this subject, and it must consist in this: you attach far more importance to the Pledge than I do—that is all. Now what matters it whether your minister be a pledged temperance man or not?"

"An anti-temperance minister! What a contradiction in terms. Such a being is an anomaly at the present time. What a man chosen to administer to the moral and spiritual wants of the community, refuse to give his aid in every possible way to the cause of suffering humanity? Ought he not to reason of temperance as well as righteousness and a judgment to come? Let him not shun to declare the whole truth, and that, too, when the community demands the most rigid observance of it."

"You do not mean that he never raises his voice in behalf of temperance?"

"He always touches the subject as if it were forbidden ground, professing much sympathy and kindness towards his fellow men, while he rejects the very principle which preserves them in the image of their Maker. It becomes every minister of the gospel boldly to unfold the broad banner of freedom in their onward march, and see that every scrupulous wrinkle be smoothed out by the hand of sympathy and love. I wish, dear Grace, that you might be induced to take the stand which I have taken, that you might know something from a conscientious discharge of duty, of uncompromising integrity and fixed purpose. I have done what I would."

Catact.

THE FIFTEEN FRIENDS.

"About twenty seven years ago, fifteen young men started together to work their share on the great field of life, and I am one of them. They all made a profession of religion at the same time. They were nearly of the same age, and all young men of talent and of respectable standing in society—all members of the same church and teachers in the same sabbath schools. They went together to the same prayer meetings, and each of them, in their turn led in prayers. They would often visit the chambers of affliction and endeavor to pour the balm of consolation to the broken hearted in their last hours. These fifteen young men engaged to provoke and assist each other in love to all good works. They were, twenty seven years ago, the hope and joy of the church of which they were members, and qualified in various ways to be a blessing to the world. O how my heart is now drawn back when I thus think and talk of my old friends. I have not seen since, a more hopeful or happy company of young disciples. And now after so many years and changes let us take a review of all the hopes above mentioned."

The first finished his earthly course some years ago, I was with him in his last struggle, and can say from my heart, "let my last end be like his."

The second went to Africa as a Missionary and was soon cut down by the pestilence, but there is a reason to believe that he finished his course with joy.

The 3d 4th and 5th are still members of the same church, and although the cares of this world have in a measure cooled their zeal, I am confident that they pursue the road that leadeth to eternal life.

The 6th went to the West Indies and in a few years ruined his vigorous constitution by using strong drinks with other things connected with the practice, and died on his voyage home, the death of the drunkard.

The 7th moved to the metropolis and soon began to walk in the way of sinners, and to sit in the seat of the scornful, and at last he and some of his companions hired a boat to amuse themselves on the Sabbath, on the river Thames, taking with them wine

and spirituous liquor. They all got intoxicated and in returning in the evening the boat upset, and they all sank into a watery grave.

The 8th, ascended the hill of riches, and became the companion of fools, and a fool himself, and slid from one step to another in sin, until he violated the laws of his country, and was brought to stand before its tribunal, and only for a small mistake in the indictment brought against him, he would have been transported far from his native country as a malefactor. He is now a drunkard and the companion of drunkards.

The 9th engaged in mercantile business with fair prospects. Every thing he laid his hands upon appeared to prosper; he married an excellent wife and became the father of a family of the most beautiful children. But by little he indulged in the practice of calling at the tavern for a social glass; yet he kept the company of the respectable; called at the most respectable houses, and kept pretty regular hours, and although many thought that it was better for professors of religion to keep at a distance from places where intoxicating drinks are made use of, yet no one thought or understood that he was in such great danger, so as to give him faithful warning, and he proceeded to take a little more, and more, and more, until he got into the habit of spending ten shillings for brandy before his dinner. The last time I saw him, destruction, fearful destruction was visible in his countenance. He had been at the gates of death; his wife and all his children had left him. I expect daily to hear of his death, or that he is in the work house. He is abandoned and rejected by the church, by his family, and by the world, and yet he will not sign the temperance pledge.

The 10th, has been a drunkard this many years. By this he has brought his wife, one of the most amiable women, to a premature grave and his five children to want and rags. Between three and four years ago I saw the fragments of his furniture carried to be put under the hammer of the auctioneer and he at the same time a homeless vagabond, wandering from place to place. I wept on witnessing the scene and silently prayed that I should be kept from the sin and sorrow of the drunkard.

The 11th was in good mercantile business for some time in London, but one night his house was burned in a way that he was suspected to have acted unfair, and the only way by which he escaped the sentence of the law for having burned his house intentionally, was that he was drunk at the time. I do not know where he is now.

The 12th, also was for some time a merchant in London. He married the daughter of a minister of the highest reputation. He continued a long time in connection with the church of Christ, and it might have been expected that he would have ran well to the end of his journey. But alas! he turned to the slippery path of the deceiver of sin, beginning with the wine bottle. This pierced the heart of his wife. Through that she became insane, and she is now in the insane asylum where she is likely to end her days. And what will be his latter end? We can easily judge, except God in his mercy prevents his perdition.

The 13th and 14th have for years walked disorderly, and have been excluded from the church. I saw one of them some years ago. He looked like an old toper. I saw the other a few weeks ago. I had not seen him before for 23 years. His hand trembled, his dress, his countenance, and every thing about him proving the melancholy fact that he was an abject slave to intoxicating drinks.

The 15th is the one who has the honor and happiness of preaching the gospel of Christ in this chapel, and who also has the privilege and consolation now to enforce temperance as a reformation, that is of the greatest importance to the cause of Christ and of the world.

And now my religious friends, look at my old companions. I have not told you the half of what I might have said about them. I might have unfolded scenes that would have rent your souls. What was the cause of the destruction of nine of the fifteen. Drink! the drink that many of you love and adhere to. Can you say that no one shall have such a history to relate of you in time to come? No, you have no certainty. The practice of total abstinence would have prevented the destruction of the friends above mentioned, and instead of being now a reproach and poison to society, and way-marks of warning to others, they might have been leaders to the young, comforters to those that mourn, and a blessing to all around them.

My dear fellow Christians, I earnestly beg of you to banish this enemy out of your houses. My brethren in the ministry, I intreat you to weigh these facts in your hearts. Think of those nine young men. I know you can call to mind many similar stories, while thirty thousand are annually excluded from our churches for drunkenness; you can easily find such histories. Arise therefore, arise, and let this evil spirit be cast out of our churches and houses, and then we shall not have such awful things to call to memory respecting any of our friends. Young Christian do not take this poisonous drink. Do not touch the cup of the drunkard.

UNWORTHY MEMBERS.

The great danger of our Order is as internal, not an external one, and springs from the unworthy character of a portion of the membership. It is wisely enjoined upon all our members to beware of introducing persons of unsound character; but this injunction is often forgotten in the anxiety to swell the numbers of Divisions, and not till the persons so introduced have acquired the power of disturbing the Order is the seriousness of the evil discovered.

It is not enough to constitute a good Son of Temperance that a man is willing to take the pledge and keep it too. His general character must be in keeping with his character as an abstainer from strong drink, or he can exert no valuable influence in the Order, or in behalf of it. If he is known as a licentious man, or as a dishonest man, or as a mischievous disturber of the peace, in the Order or out of it, he is of no advantage to the cause but a reproach or a hindrance; although he may never render himself liable to discipline for violating the pledge.

It cannot be too thoughtfully considered that one bad man in the Order can do more to prejudice our cause in the public mind than several good men can do to promote it. It is not, therefore, of near so much importance that our membership should be numerous as that it should be of an elevated, commanding character. Brothers, let us keep this truth in mind, and strive to maintain a personable character, irreproachable in all points, and at the same time let us not be tempted by any consideration to propose for membership any who are not anxious to cultivate all the characteristics of a pure morality.—N. Y. Organ.

A NEWSPAPER.

It was Bishop Honer's opinion that there is no better moralist than a newspaper. He says "The follies, vices and consequent miseries, of multitudes displayed in a newspaper, are so many admonitions and warnings, so many beacon lights continually burning, to turn others from the rock on which they have been shipwrecked. What more powerfully dissuasive from suspicion, jealousy and anger, than the story of one friend murdered by another in a duel? What caution likely to be more effectual against gambling and profligacy, than the mournful relation of an execution or the fate of a despairing suicide? What finer lecture on the necessity of economy, than the auctions of estates, houses and furniture? Only take a newspaper, and consider it well—pay for it—read it—and it will instruct thee."

FALSTAFF.—Mr. Giles, at the close of his lecture upon Falstaff, eloquently "points a moral" by the following picture of the last days of the fat, funny and sack-loving knight:

"What a mournful condition of humanity is presented to us in the debasement of talent to the appetites? Behold it in the picture set before us in Falstaff. Look at the grey-headed, grey-bearded old man, lolled, bloated on the dregs of life; the desires inattentive as the strength declines; the senses gross, while a brilliant imagination flows radiance over them, as the sun upon a morass; abilities which might have exalted empires, devoted to the cooking of a cydon, or the merits of a sack posset; eloquence and wit lavished upon blackguards; law, honor, courage, chastity, made a jest. Laugh, it is true, you must; but when you have laughed, turn back and think; and after thinking, you will admit that tragedy itself has not any thing more sad."

THE TERM "BROTHER JONATHAN."—General Washington placed great confidence in the good sense and patriotism of Jonathan Tumbull, who at an early period of the American revolution, was Governor of the State of Connecticut. In a certain emergency, when a measure of great importance was under discussion, Washington remarked, "we must consult Brother Jonathan on the subject."

The result of that consultation was favorable. Thus, from the constant use of the expression, "we must consult Brother Jonathan," which soon passed from the army to the people at large, we received that appellation, which has stuck to us as closely as "John Bull" to the English.

MR. WEBSTER AND TEMPERANCE. The Hon. Daniel Webster's wine, to the extent of 1000 bottles, imported for his own use, has lately been sold by auction in Boston. Various speculations are afloat as to the cause which induced the sale, but the New York Sun says the true cause is that he has lately been enrolled as an honorary member of the Temperance Society.

TO MAKE HENS LAY.—The South Carolina says a neighbor states that hog's lard is the best thing that he can find to give to his hens. He says that one cut of this fat as large as a walnut, mixed up with the dough they eat, will set a hen to laying immediately after she has been broken up from sitting, and that, by feeding them with the fat occasionally, his hens continue laying through the whole winter.